

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting**  
**Thursday, November 14, 2013, Preston Community Center**

*Commissioners present:* Dick Ryon, North Bend resident; Doug McClelland, Washington DNR; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Nate Veranth, forest landowner; Ron Baum, forest landowner; Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe; Daryl Harper, forest landowner; Sandy Miller, forest landowner

*Staff:* Alan Painter, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); David Kimmett, King County Parks Division; Joan Lee, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Kathy Creahan, WLRD; and Linda Vane, Commission Liaison, WLRD

Vice Chair Dick Ryon called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

*Minutes:* Motion 1-0913 That the minutes of the September 12, 2013 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Nominations for 2014 officers**

Dick opened nominations for the positions of Rural Forest Commission Chair, Vice Chair and two at-large members of the Executive Committee. Nominations will remain open until just before the election during the January 2014 meeting.

**Agency and staff reports and announcements**

*Community Service Areas (SCA)* – Alan Painter reported that the SCA program would offer Community Engagement Grants in 2014 to promote community-building in unincorporated areas. Past recipients have used grants for neighborhood movies, signs, and a variety of community improvement projects. Projects related to emergency response and Firewise that bring people together are eligible, according to Alan. Applications are due January 10, 2014. [<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/community-service-areas/engagement-grants>]

*King County Parks Division Trails Update* – David Kimmett provided an update on the County's work toward streamlining permitting for soft surface trails. He said that the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (EMBA) is working with Hancock Timber Management Group to improve existing trails and build additional new trails on Hancock land. Because EMBA develops trails on properties owned by a variety of owners, the County's Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER) recommended that the non-profit seek a programmatic permit modeled after the Parks Division's trails programmatic permit. According to Dave, if successful this innovative approach could provide a number of benefits, including:

- 1) EMBA's programmatic permit could serve as a model for other organizations. Applicants could get a single programmatic permit that would cover a variety of trail projects, even if the properties had different owners.

- 2) The programmatic permit could serve as a model to develop standards for soft surface trails, which in turn could be used for new code allowing trails that meet the standards to be built without permits.

Dave explained that the next steps involve figuring out the fine points of implementation. There is already agreement on a policy level. The goal is to update the code to avoid the need for permits unless sensitive areas are involved, he said. Dave added that most backcounty trails are built in dry upland locations, well away from environmentally sensitive areas.

### **2014 KC Strategic Plan Update – Public Outreach Process**

Meagan Eliot, King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Meagan provided an overview of the history and successes of the County's 2010 Strategic Plan. She said that for the 2014 update the County wants to identify key priorities at the beginning of the process and has asked for help from the public. She explained that the County's approach has employed three types of effort:

- 1) Public meetings
- 2) Targeted discussions with interest and focus groups (in five languages)
- 3) An online forum that serves to report the outcomes of the first two efforts and solicit additional input [<http://www.onekingcounty.info>]

Meagan reviewed the topic areas that have garnered the most comments so far. These include transportation, the economy and living wage jobs, housing, and safety, among others. She encouraged the members of the Commission to visit the online forum and provide input.

Dick commended the County on the online forum, commented that it gives one the feeling, legitimately, that their voices are being heard. Daryl Harper asked who would see the information collected through this process and how it would become actionable? Meagan responded that staff would assemble what they heard from the public in draft form. She explained that the Council and Executive Office would each have roles in developing the policy goals of the draft plan and would work with the departments to identify the steps needed to achieve the goals. She said that the draft plan would be ready for public review and comment in the spring of 2014. Alan Painter added that the completed Strategic Plan would be used by departments to establish their program objectives and budgets.

The Commissioners engaged in an extensive discussion of the Strategic Plan update process and approaches for making their views known. The group decided to provide input to the draft Strategic Plan in the form of a letter to Executive Constantine, drawing from the policy and program priorities that the group had previously identified.

### **Update on the King Conservation District/ King County Task Force and Conservation Panel process**

Brandy Reed, Senior Program Manager, King Conservation District

Brandy reported that the Task Force/Conservation Panel process was concluded in a final meeting on October 21, 2013. She reflected that the process ended up on a positive note with genuine dialogue among the participants. She said that Task Force and Conservation Panel (TF/CP) identified policy priorities and conservation programs for the KCD to consider as it moves forward. The policy priorities involved are: KCD Board elections, the Member Jurisdiction Grant Program, outreach to cities, and re-establishing the KCD Advisory Committee. She said that the KCD would focus on continuing to engage the stakeholder group on those priorities.

Brandy said that the TF/CP also made a number of recommendations for expanding KCD's services, particularly services to private landowners. She said that the KCD would be evaluating these recommendations including the question of how to fund the additional services. The areas of interest for the Commission would center on recommendations regarding services for small forest landowners, a rural forest products cooperative, and urban forestry, according to Brandy.

Brandy said that the TF/CP final report and recommendations would be available on the KCD website. [<http://www.kingcd.org/news-task-force.htm>]

### **Mountains to Sound Greenway Update**

Doug Schindler, Deputy Director, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Doug S. provided an overview of the history of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (MTSGT) and its major achievements in moving toward its ultimate goal of retaining forests. At the time of the organization's founding, major timber landowners were leaving the area and forestlands were subject to conversion to other uses. Doug pointed out that we had recently have seen the results of 20 years of work with King County's announcement that the Transfer of Development Rights Program had achieved its goal of protecting 200,000 forest acres from development.

Doug S. went on to describe MTSGT's most recent efforts to established formal boundaries for the Greenway and to seek federal recognition as a Heritage Area. Doug then asked the Commission for input on a number of questions related to measuring the qualitative values of forests in the western half of the Greenway. For example, 77% of the Snoqualmie watershed is protected from development by public ownership or conservation easements. Doug S. asked, "What values are we receiving when public money is invested in conserving forest and farmlands." He pointed out that these are working lands and yet some may experience them from a recreation or aesthetic perspective.

Doug S. asked the group what three actions the Greenway Trust should work on regarding forests. Responses included:

- Education. One of cornerstones of the Greenway was to educate the public about the management options in the forests in terms of timber harvest, protection from development and wildlife habitat.
- Provide public access. Access protects rather than harms forests.
- Find ways to coordinate land management efforts because public agencies in particular, do not have the money to both effectively manage land and provide infrastructure for visitors.
- Provide opportunities for children to experience the forest.
- Remain a group of citizens acting in their own best interests. Resist becoming an official agency of anything.
- Continue activities like the “Trek,” which support people experiencing the Greenway.
- Get people involved and find small projects than can be replicated widely.
- Kids should learn where the food and water that they rely on from day to day come from. Provide opportunities for families to experience farms.
- Look at the WSU Extension Coached Forest Stewardship course for ideas on how to reach youth and urban audiences.
- Consider the Nature Consortium as a model.

Doug thanked the group for their ideas.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held in January 2014 at the Preston Community Center.

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